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JUSTICE LEAGUE® TASK FORCE™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

THE ENIGMATIC

SAVAGE

WAID
PRIEST
VELLUTO
MCKENNA

Velluto
Albrecht

SAVAGE LEGACY - PART III

INQUISITION

HIS NAME USED TO BE DESPERO.

NOW NO ONE KNOWS WHAT TO CALL HIM.

INSIDE THE BRUTISH BODY OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE JUSTICE LEAGUE'S DEADLIEST FOE NOW LIES THE COMPUTER BRAIN OF L-RON, MILD-MANNERED NAÏF OF THE SPACEWAYS.

UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, L-RON LUMBERS THROUGH EACH DAY STRIVING TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DESPERO'S BARBARIC STRENGTH.

TODAY, HE'S TAKING THE DAY OFF.

MARK WAID & PRIEST
WRITERS
SAL VELLUTO
PENCILLER
MARK McKENNA
INKER
KEVIN CUNNINGHAM
LETTERER
DAVE GRAFE
COLORIST
RUBEN DIAZ
EDITOR
BRIAN AUGUSTYN
GURU
SPECIAL INKING THANKS TO
MICK GRAY &
AARON McCLELLAN

MARTIAN MANHUNTER-- I BELIEVE WE HAVE A *PROBLEM.*

I SUPPOSE *KNOCKING* WOULD HAVE BEEN OUT OF ORDER, *Eh,* DESPERO?

I AM *L-RON,* VANDAL SAVAGE--

--MY BUSINESS IS *URGENT,* AND FOR THE *MANHUNTER ALONE.*

IT'S ALL RIGHT, L-RON. WHILE VANDAL SAVAGE IS CERTAINLY *NO FRIEND,* HE *DID* INVITE US HERE TO HIS *CRYSTAL PALACE* ON A MISSION WHICH CONCERNS OUR *MUTUAL INTEREST.*

--MAINLY A *LIST* OF MY *KNOWN DESCENDANTS* WHICH WAS *STOLEN* FROM ME BY AN *UNKNOWN FOE*-- SOME *MADMAN* BENT ON *ENDING* MY 50,000-YEAR EXISTENCE BY *WIPING OUT* ALL POTENTIAL ORGAN... DONORS.

POTENTIALLY *MILLIONS* OF INNOCENT LIVES ARE AT RISK.

TEA?

J'ONN-- COME WITH ME *IMMEDIATELY.*

AS INSTRUCTED I WAS WAITING HERE IN THE ATRIUM, WHILE YOU AND SAVAGE DISCUSSED *TACTICS.*

I OBSERVED A *MAJOR EXPLOSION* APPROXIMATELY 25 MILES EAST.

DID YOU *SCAN* THE AREA?

YES, I EMPLOYED DESPERO'S THIRD EYE'S *TELEPATHIC CAPACITY* TO CANVASS THE AREA. J'ONN--

--RAY AND TRIUMPH ARE IN THAT IMMEDIATE VICINITY.

WHERE IS GYPSY?

AVOIDING ME, I SUSPECT. SHE REACTS QUITE NEGATIVELY TO THIS FORM.

FIND HER.

BUT--

FIND HER, L-RON. WE'RE PROBABLY UNDER ATTACK.

I'M GOING AFTER THE BOYS.

EXCUSE ME, Mr. SAVAGE--

--BUT, WHICH WAY IS THE LADIES ROOM--?

GOTCHA.

MIT

YOUR CHAMELEON POWER IS INTERESTING, GYPSY. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT.

I MEAN, HOW DO YOU *BLEND* WITH WHATEVER'S *AROUND YOU* LIKE THAT?

AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS *ENERGY-BASED*-- LIKE A *LIGHT REFRACTION* OR SOMETHING.

BUT THEN ONE OF SAVAGE'S *SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS* CAUGHT YOU *HIDING* FROM *DESPERO* ON THE ATRIUM DECK.* NO ONE COULD SEE YOU, BUT THE *CAMERA* PICKED YOU UP.

THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED YOUR POWER HAS TO BE *ORGANIC*.

Y'KNOW--SOME KIND OF *PHEROMONE* THAT ATTACKS OUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEMS-- *CANCELS* YOU OUT...

STBY

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...BUT THE *CAMERA* DOESN'T *LIE*.

I *KNOW* YOU'RE HERE *SOMEWHERE*, MISSY.

I HATE TO HAVE TO *SHOOT* YOU AND ALL, BUT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO COME OUT --AND *TIME'S WASTING*.

*LAST ISH. --ROO

A MINUTE AGO I WAS COMPLAINING ABOUT HAVING *NOTHING* TO DO--

--WELL, THEY SAY BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR...

--I'VE GOT TO TAKE DOWN Mr. HAPPY AND GET BACK TO THE *OTHERS*.

IS THAT ONE OF SAVAGE'S PEOPLE--OR HAS THE PALACE BEEN *INVADED*--?

WELL, I SUPPOSE IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER--

TWOCK

Ah--

Oh, NO...

THERE YOU ARE, GYPSY.

J'ONN HAS REQUESTED YOU RETURN TO THE *COMMAND DECK*--

YWIP! YWIP!

YWIP!!

L-RON-- YOU *DOPE*--!

LOOK, L-RON, I KNOW YOU *MEAN WELL*--

--BUT I'M A *BIG GIRL*.

A MEMBER OF THE *JUSTICE LEAGUE*.

I CAN HANDLE *MYSELF*!

WHAM

PICK IT UP.

C'MON-- SHOW ME HOW MUCH OF A *MAN* YOU ARE.

I'D *LOVE* TO, GYPSY--

--BUT, LIKE I SAID--

--I'M ON A *CLOCK* HERE.

FFFSSSSSSS

AAAAH!!

CAN'T... CAN'T SEE HIM--

--GONE--?

--L-RON-- CAN YOU SCAN--

--L-RON--?

DESPERO--?

HELLO--?

NOTHING.

HE JUST EXXED OUT ON ME. THAT WEIRD ENERGY GAHOOZIT MUST'VE CRASHED HIS HARD DRIVE OR SOMETHING.

STRANGE, THOUGH--

--FOR A *ROBOT*, THAT'S ONE HECK OF A *SNARL*--

MAYBE THE LITTLE GUY'S INTO *METHOD ACTING*. WHO *CARES*?

I'M ACTUALLY *GLAD* HE'S *FRIED*.

I'D BETTER GET BACK TO J'ONN--LET HIM KNOW THAT--

"--ALL *HELL'S* BREAKING LOOSE!"

TRIUMPH... I *TOLD* YOU NOT TO LOOK IN THERE.

THAT'S IT, RAY. BE HELPFUL.

SO... WHAT'S IN SAVAGE'S DESK *DRAWER?*

YOUR HEAD IF YOU KEEP PUSHING ME, JUNIOR.

I GOT YOUR "*JUNIOR*" RIGHT HERE, WHITE BOY.

WHAT-- ON-- EARTH--?

GAS MAIN, MA'AM.

THERE WAS A REPORT...

WAIT--I DIDN'T--

LET ME PUT IT *THIS* WAY-- GET *OUT* OF HERE--

YEEE-OWW--!!

--BEFORE THINGS GET *WORSE!*

RATTATTATATTATTAT--!!

MORE OF THOSE ATTACKERS--THE PEOPLE GOING AFTER THE MASTER!

YOU MEAN THOSE HOUR GLASS GUYS--?

'SCUSE ME, ARE YOU HIGH--?

WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE--ESCAPE WHILE WE CAN!

WE MUST WARN THE MASTER!

THESE ARE PROBABLY THE GOONS WHO STASHED A BOMB IN VANDAL SAVAGE'S OFFICE--!

I SAY WE SLAG FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER--

FORGET 'EM.

WE'VE GOT TO DELIVER THE DISK TO THE MASTER!

THE WHAT TO THE WHO--?

Oh, WAIT. I GET IT.

Duh.

YES--OUR MASTER IS OUR PRIORITY!

LET US RETURN TO BASE-- ERE WE INCUR HIS WRATH!!

HEY--

--DON'T LOSE YOURSELF IN THE PART, OKAY?

IT WOULD HELP IF YOU'D CLUE ME IN EVERY ONCE IN AWHILE, SPUD-BRAIN.

LIKE, WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAD THOSE MORONS RIGHT TO SAVAGE--?

WATCH AND LEARN, JUNIOR.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU ALL DAY--

--NOTHING IS WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE!

RAY AND TRIUMPH-- RUNNING FROM THEIR ATTACKERS--

--FINALLY.

I THOUGHT THEY'D NEVER LEAVE.

THE OFFICE IS *CLEARED OUT.*

AT LEAST THEY'VE DONE *ONE THING* RIGHT.

ALTHOUGH THEIR *PROCESS* IS FLAWED, RAY AND TRIUMPH HAVE *ACCIDENTALLY* ACCOMPLISHED WHAT I *WANTED* ALL ALONG--

I WANT THE WHOLE STORY.

--A *LOOK* AROUND SAVAGE'S OFFICE --*WITHOUT* HIS *SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS FUNCTIONING.*

TRIUMPH IS *CLUMSY, INEXPERIENCED,* AND *OBVIOUS.* STILL, HE HAS A *KEEN MIND,* AND WE *BOTH AGREE--*

--THERE'S *MORE* TO VANDAL SAVAGE THAN MEETS THE EYE. HE'S NOT TELLING US THE *WHOLE* STORY.

WHAAAAAAAAMM!

JUST AS I SUSPECTED.

MEAN-WHILE...

OKAY, WE'VE *LURED* THOSE *SLED GUYS* INTO SAVAGE'S SECRET *TUNNEL*, BRINGING THEM *BACK* TO HIS *HEADQUARTERS*.

WHAT'S THE *PLAN?*

THAT *IS* THE PLAN.

I NEED TO KNOW *WHICH SIDE* WE'RE ON. IF SAVAGE IS ON THE UP AND UP, I WANT TO BRING THESE IDIOTS RIGHT INTO SAVAGE'S *LIVING ROOM*--

--SEE HOW THEY *REACT* ONCE WE *GET* THERE.

TRIUMPH--

--THEY SEEM TO BE *REACTING* BY *SHOOTING* AT US.

ALWAYS THE *OBVIOUS* THING WITH YOU, Huh, RAY?

IT'S A *GIFT.*

YOU *REALLY* THINK SAVAGE BLEW UP HIS *OWN* *OFFICE*--THAT HE *MADE* *UP* THIS *THREAT*--?! *WHY?!*

HAVEN'T DOPED THAT OUT YET.

THE KEY WORD THERE BEING "*DOPE*"--

I NEED TO COMPARE NOTES WITH J'ONN--HEY-- WHAT'S THAT *LIGHT*--?

SKRRR-CH!

WHA--? MY POWERS...

...GONE --?!

WAY, WAY UPSTAIRS...

...YES...YES... NO...YOUR CALL... YES... NO...

VANDAL SAVAGE!!

GYPSY--I'M ON THE *PHONE.*

HANG IT UP.

IT'S *LONG DISTANCE--*

FWAAAPP

I SAID *NOW,* CAVE MAN.

WHY'D YOU SEND SOME GUY TO *SHOOT* ME?!

YOU'RE *INSANE.*

HECTOR-- GET TOKYO BACK, PLEASE.

I'M CRAZY? THEN WHY IS MY *SHOULDER* BLEEDING? WHY IS MY TEAM-MATE PARALYZED --MAYBE *DEAD* --?

I DON'T KNOW.

I DON'T CARE.

GO AWAY.

YOU CAME TO *US* FOR HELP, SAVAGE-- BUT SO FAR, *WE'RE* THE ONLY ONES GETTING *SHOT AT.*

AND THAT *ALONE* MAKES YOU THINK I'M SOME *THREAT* TO YOU--?

GANG-- WAY!!

YES, OF COURSE.

RATTATTATTATTATAT--!

IF THESE GUYS WORK FOR SAVAGE, THEY'RE PUTTING ON A HECK OF AN ACT. IS SAVAGE NUTS ENOUGH TO TAKE A *BULLET* JUST TO FAKE US OUT--?

THESE GUYS ARE TRYING TO *WASTE* SAVAGE--AND I BROUGHT THEM *RIGHT TO HIM!!*

MAN...I GOTTA *WAKE UP.*

I'VE GOT TO LEARN TO TRUST MY INSTINCTS.

Oh--*GOOD* ONE, TERRILL! LISTEN TO TRIUMPH--HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT--

EVERYBODY--DOWN!!

IT'S LIKE I TRUST EVERYBODY BUT *ME.*

MAYBE I'M NOT *HALF* AS STUPID AS I THINK I AM--

YOU GUYS OKAY--?

Mr. SAVAGE--?

--YOU'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.

WHERE'S J'ONN?

ME? BUT I THOUGHT *YOU*--

--oh, no.

ON MY WAY.

WE'VE GONE *FULL ALERT.* THE PALACE IS *COMPLETELY SEALED,* THE *CHARGED PARTICLE FIELD* OPERATING AT 100%. *NO ONE* CAN GET IN OR OUT.

OBVIOUSLY THOSE MEN PURSUING THE TASK FORCE--

M.S.T.

NO, THAT'S JUST IT--

--I *DIDN'T* ORDER ANY ALERT, BOSS.

SOMETHING *REALLY HAIRY* HERE-- ALL CHANGES HAVE BEEN *LOCKED OUT.* I'VE BEEN *BOOTED OUT* OF SYSTEM, AND THE ENCRONIC BATTERIES--

--ARE *SUPER-CHARGING.* THEY'RE WAY PAST RATED LEVELS. IF WE DON'T SHUT IT DOWN *RIGHT AWAY--*

--THE *PALACE* WILL BE *VAPORIZED* IN A *HUGE EXPLOSION.*

BEHIND YOU!

WHAT THE HELL--?

SOUND *FULL ALERT.*

START THE *CLOCK.*

RIDDLES INSIDE MYSTERIES INSIDE ENIGMAS! WHAT WHO KNOWS WHO THINKS ABOUT WHAT.

MAYBE TRIUMPH IS SECRETLY *OLIVER STONE!*

MAYBE TRIUMPH IS SECRETLY *NUTS...*

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T EVEN *BE* HERE.

I NEED TO MAKE UP MY MIND...DECIDE WHAT I'M GOING TO DO ABOUT MY *MOM*--

--I'M JUST *USING* THE TASK FORCE AS A *DISTRACTION* --TO KEEP FROM DEALING WITH MY *REAL PROBLEMS*--

THERE HE IS--!

HEY, TRIUMPH --WE KEEPING YOU *UP*--?

MY POWER-- BLIPPED OUT ON ME. I SUSPECT IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT *CHARGED PARTICLE* BUSINESS.

AND *YOU'RE NEXT*, RAY. IF I'M *RIGHT*, YOU'RE ON *RESERVES* RIGHT NOW. THE FIELD *POLARIZES* ALL AMBIENT ELECTROMAGNETIC ENERGY.

WHICH, IN ENGLISH, MEANS--

--YOU CAN'T *RECHARGE*. ONCE IT'S GONE, IT'S *GONE*.

SO-- SAVAGE *WINS*?

Oh, NO-- NOT YOU, TOO? *YOU* THINK THIS IS SOME *SCAM*--?

I ALMOST GOT *ICED* IN THE *BATHROOM*, RAY-- L-RON IS... WELL... I GUESS *DEAD* IS THE WORD FOR IT--

--AND J'ONN IS *MISSING*.

SO, SAVAGE TRIED TO HAVE *HIMSELF* SHOT? BLEW UP HIS OWN OFFICE?

PEOPLE--EITHER SAVAGE IS BEING *STRAIGHT* WITH US OR HE'S *NOT*. WE HAVE TO DECIDE.

JUST KNOW THAT THE WRONG ANSWER WILL GET US ALL *KILLED*--

ATTENTION, TASK FORCE--!

--THERE IS AN *EMERGENCY SITUATION* IN PROGRESS. A *SABOTEUR* HAS TAMPERED WITH THE PALACE'S *POWER SOURCE*.

IT APPEARS *ALL SAFETIES* HAVE BEEN *OVERRIDDEN*.

MIT

THE POWER *OVERLOAD* WILL BEGIN A *CHAIN REACTION* WHICH WILL CAUSE THE BATTERIES TO RUPTURE.

AND WE ALL GET *KILLED* IN THE EXPLOSION.

YES, OF COURSE. I BELIEVE I IMPLIED THAT.

PLEASE DO YOUR BEST TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION. IF YOU NEED ME--

--I'LL BE *RESTING* IN MY *QUARTERS*.

WAIT--HOW LONG BEFORE *CRITICAL MASS*--?

TWELVE MINUTES, I BELIEVE.

CALL ME WHEN YOU FIND SOMETHING.

TUNA SANDWICH.

MASTER PLANNER.

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS. WOULD'YOU BOYS JUST CHOOSE ONE! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH *TIME*!

ELSEWHERE...

NOW FOCUS, BILLY. KEEP YOUR LEGS STEADY...

YEAH! THAT'S IT, TIGER !!

MISS WATKINS, WE NEED TO TALK.

I DON'T BELIEVE I KNOW YOU.

I'M SURE YOU DO. MY NAME IS JOHN JONES. I'M A DETECTIVE.

MISS WATKINS, VANDAL SAVAGE INTENDS TO KILL YOU. HE'S USING ME AND MY STUDENTS TO ACCOMPLISH THAT.

SORRY. CAN'T HELP YOU.

I KNOW YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE THEFT OF SAVAGE'S LIST. AND I KNOW WHY--

--I KNOW WHOSE NAME IS ON IT.

VANDAL SAVAGE *HARVESTS* HUMAN ORGANS, Mr. JONES. SURELY YOU DON'T APPROVE OF THAT.

BY *STEALING* SAVAGE'S *PROPERTY*, YOU'VE MADE YOURSELF A *TARGET*, MISS WATKINS.

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF *TIME* BEFORE SAVAGE LEARNS THE *TRUTH*.

SOME DETECTIVE.

SAVAGE ALREADY *KNOWS* WHO STOLE HIS DAMNED LIST

Y'SEE, Mr. JONES, THE LAW OF AVERAGES DICTATES EVERY SO OFTEN ONE OF SAVAGE'S DESCENDANTS WILL MANIFEST A *GREATER* STRAIN OF THE X-FACTOR WHICH GIVES SAVAGE HIS IMMORTALITY.

I'M ONE OF THOSE.

--MY *SON* IS *ANOTHER*. OUR NAMES WERE LISTED IN AN *ENCRYPTED DIRECTORY* ON SAVAGE'S STOLEN DISK.

A LIST OF PEOPLE HE'D KEEP *FROZEN* IN HIS *WALL*.

HE'S KEEPING *TABS* ON BILLY--*BREEDING* HIM FOR *SPARE PARTS*. WHEN HE'S OLD ENOUGH, HE'LL BE *KIDNAPPED* AND *PRESERVED*--

--UNLESS I TAKE *SAVAGE* OUT *FIRST*.

MISS WATKINS--

--I'M *TRYING* TO *HELP YOU*.

IT TOOK ME *THREE PHONE CALLS* TO FIND YOU. IT'LL TAKE SAVAGE *LESS*.

MY *FORTUNE* AFFORDS ME A LOT OF CONTACTS-- HIGH-TECH MERCENARIES-- DETECTIVES LIKE YOURSELF--

--WELL, MAYBE NOT EXACTLY...

THIS IS BETWEEN SAVAGE AND *ME*, Mr. JONES. BY TAKING THE OFFENSIVE, *I'M* SETTING THE PACE AND AGENDA.

I'M GOING TO SETTLE THINGS WITH MY DEAR ANCESTOR, Mr. JONES. I ADVISE YOU TO PULL YOUR TEAM *OUT*--

"--WHILE YOU STILL CAN."

TIME--?

EIGHT MINUTES, TEN SECONDS.

ANYTHING, RAY?

WELL-- I'VE *JUMPED* THE O/S--* SCREWED WITH THE SYSTEM RESOURCE FORK TO BYPASS ALL THE SECURITY ON THIS RIG--

*OPERATING SYSTEM --COMPUROO

--BUT I'M STILL COUGHING UP BLOOD.

IT ALL LOOKS LIKE "*WHERE'S WALDO?*" TO ME.

DAMN.

THINK, RAY--YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE COMPUTER JUNKIE --

IF *YOU* WERE GONNA SCREW UP A *BILLION-DOLLAR* POWER SYSTEM, *WHERE* WOULD YOU *DO* IT--?

ME--? I'D DO IT IN *THE LADIES' ROOM.*

THE-- *WHAT--?*

YEAH. LOOKS LIKE A *MAJOR ACCESS TUBE* TERMINATES THERE.

DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU AND DESPERO WERE *ATTACKED--*

THAT'S WHAT HE MEANT BY "*WAITING FOR YOU TO COME OUT--*"

--THAT'S HOW HE *DISAPPEARED!* HE WENT DOWN SOME DAMNED *HATCH* IN THERE!

SEWAGE.

"THE DOG BARKS AT MIDNIGHT." WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COLUMBO?

WHERE DOES THE PALACE *SEWAGE* GET PROCESSED--?

4:3 1:29

SO, WE FIGURE THE *BADGUY*-- WHOEVER RIGGED THE JOINT IS THE *ONLY ONE* WHO CAN *UN-RIG* IT--

--AND THAT THE *SEWER* IS THE *LEAST ARMORED* AREA OF THE COMPLEX--

--HIS SUREST *ESCAPE ROUTE*.

THIS IS *BOUND* TO BE *DICEY*. WE SHOULD SEND *RAY*.

GEE, THANKS.

YOU'RE THE BIGGEST GUN WE'VE GOT LEFT, RAY. THERE'S NO TELLING WHO'S DOWN THERE OR WHAT SURPRISES HE'S GOT--

NO, TRIUMPH. *I* HAVE TO GO.

WE MAY NEED WHAT POWER RAY'S GOT LEFT TO *SAVE LIVES*.

WHY *YOU*--?

BESIDES--THIS GUY AND ME ARE *OLD FRIENDS*.

SPLAAASH!!

HIYA, GYPSY.

I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU'D COME.

VWIP! VWIP!

I KNOW YOU'RE USING YOUR *CHAMELEON* POWER TO BLEND IN WITH THE BACKGROUND--

--BUT I *KNOW* YOU'RE *HERE*--

GOOD WORK, GYPSY--

--I REMEMBER YOUR *PERFUME*--

--WHA--?

--VERY GOOD.

DEATH TO ALL TRAITORS!

SNAP!

TUNA SANDWICH.

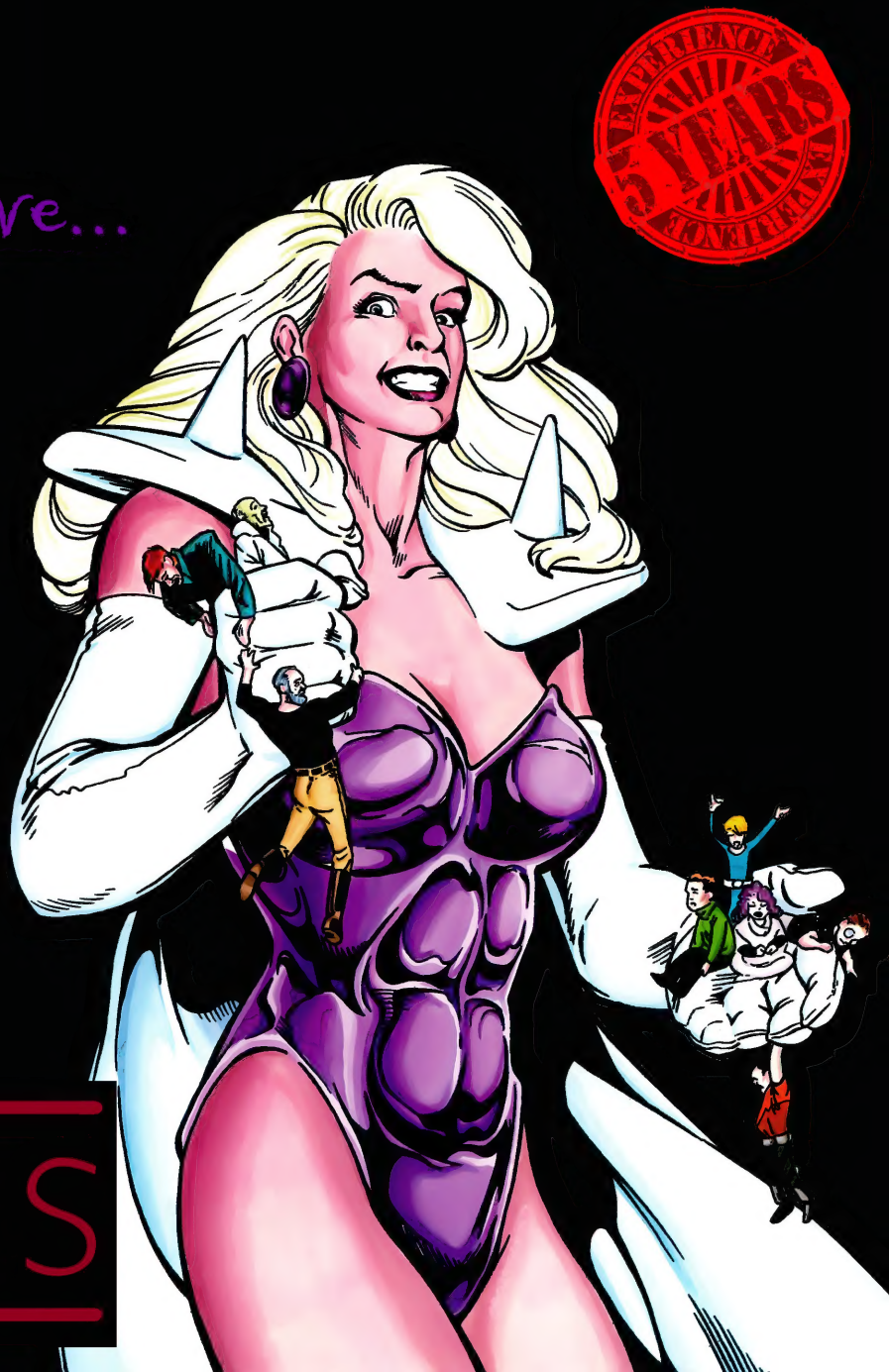
B-BUT-- SAVAGE--

--HE WAS THE *ONLY ONE* WHO COULD SAVE US--

3:45: 19

NEXT: DOWN COUNT- THE TASK FORCE'S THREE LONGEST MINUTES!

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus